

THE QIN (CHIN) DYNASTY

221-206 BCE



The Qin Dynasty was established when the Qin clan conquered all the other warring states and established the first Chinese empire in 221 BC. The new emperor called himself Shi Huang Ti. Shi Huang Ti was only 13 years old at the time he took control of China. Under his 15 year rule, he unified China. Much of his rule was cruel but also much was accomplished during those 15 years. Legalism, a philosophical way of life, was adopted as the official government policy. This meant there were serious punishments for crimes. The term "emperor" was used as a title instead of king. Shi Huang Ti divided China into 36 provinces and sent his officials to rule the provinces. Shi Huang Ti set up a bureaucracy. Government workers were trained in specific jobs and received a salary. He forced nobles to live near him at the capital so that he could keep an eye on them. He set up a spy system, where neighbors spied on neighbors. If people turned in lawbreakers they were rewarded. His organizational system gave him great power.

He had roads built into the capital to make traveling easier. He also built canals and bridges. He made one code of laws that ruled all of China. Shi Huang Ti took steps to prevent rebellion. He ordered all people except his soldiers to turn their weapons over to the government. Shi Huang Ti also had records of ancient China destroyed. Around 213B.C. he also had books burned. Many ancient books about Confucius were destroyed. Shi Huang Ti did not believe in education for the common man and believed in total censorship among his people. Over 400 scholars were put to death for refusing to burn books.

During the Qin Dynasty, a standardized coin system was adopted to encourage trade. Shi Huang Ti had these coins minted, they were round with a square hole. A standardized and compulsory writing system was

established. This was the first time writing brushes were used to print the calligraphy. Chop sticks were also invented during the Qin dynasty. A standardized system of weights and measures was established. People could own land, and taxes and laws applied to all, regardless of position in society. Territories that were once ruled by nobles were divided into provinces and ruled by government officials.



During the Qin Dynasty, citizens were expected to help with public labor. The Huns and other nomads from the north were continually invading China's borders. Shi Huang Ti ordered walls to be built to protect China's borders. Over 30,000 peasants worked to complete 1400 miles of the Great Wall. These workers were not paid and Shi Huang Ti considered it their duty to China to help build the wall. Many workers lost their lives building the wall. The project continued after Shi Huang Ti died, until the wall was over 3700 miles in length.

Another outstanding building project was the building of the terra cotta army. 720,000 laborers spent 34 years constructing a clay army for emperor Shi Huang Ti. He thought he would be prepared in the next life. In 1974, 6000 life size terra cotta clay soldiers were discovered in a farmer's field.

When Shi Huang Ti died his son took over, but he did not rule very long. People revolted against the Qin government. The peasants that led the revolt became the first emperor of the Han Dynasty.

